SUBSTANCE

OF THE

SPEECH

OF

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

HENRY ADDINGTON.

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SUBSTANCE

OF THE

SPEECH

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THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

HENRY ADDINGTON,

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS,

ON THE 12TH OF FEBRUARY, 1799,

IN

THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE HOUSE,

TO WHOM

HIS MAJESTY'S MOST GRACIOUS MESSAGE

OF THE 22D JANUARY,

RELATIVE TO IRELAND,

WAS REFERRED.

—DUBLIN:—

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1799.

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SUBSTANCE

OF THE

SPEECH,

&c. &c.

Mr. DOUGLAS in the Chair:

THE Motion was—"That, in order to promote "and ſecure the eſſential intereſts of Great Britain "and Ireland, and to conſolidate the ſtrength, "power, and reſources of the Britiſh Empire, "it will be adviſable to concur in ſuch meaſures "as may beſt tend to unite the two Kingdoms "of Great Britain and Ireland into one Kingdom, "in ſuch manner, and on ſuch terms and con-"ditions, as may be eſtabliſhed by Acts of "the reſpective Parliaments of his Majeſty's ſaid "Kingdoms."

The SPEAKER ſaid,

THE occaſions were few on which he was diſpoſed to take any other part in the debates and proceedings of the Houſe, than that which was called for by his official duty; on the preſent important queſtion, however, he thought it incumbent upon him to expreſs his opinion by his vote; and, exhauſted as the ſubject had been, he hoped for the indulgence of the Committee, whilſt he ſtated the grounds upon which that vote would be given.

His

His view of the ſubject was, indeed, very different from that of his Honourable Friend (Mr. Bankes) who had declared it to be his opinion, that the ſituation of Ireland was ſuch, as to render it not only inexpedient, but unſafe, to coaleſce with her. Now it was upon the ſituation of that country, at the preſent moment, that he founded his conviction, not merely of the expediency, for of that he had long been ſatisfied, but of the urgent and preſſing neceſſity of the meaſure in queſtion; which, though conſidered by his Honourable Friend as in no degree tending to remedy thoſe evils, which were univerſally acknowledged, he was convinced would, in the firſt inſtance, palliate, and ultimately eradicate them; would at once have the effect of allaying irritation and animoſity, and ere long, he truſted, of extinguiſhing them for ever.

His Honourable Friend was alſo diſpoſed to think, that the Legiſlature of Ireland was fully adequate to the redreſs of thoſe grievances which require parliamentary interpoſition, and to the reſtoration of internal tranquillity. This ſuppoſition unfortunately was not warranted by experience: to the redreſs of ſome of the grievances complained of, and to the removal of ſome of the cauſes of irritation, the Speaker ſaid its adequacy could not be doubted; but there were radical and inherent evils, cloſely interwoven with the ſtate and condition of Ireland, and with the temper, the feelings, and the prejudices of the great body of the people, which, though they were not occaſioned by the ſeparation of the two Legiſlatures, he was convinced an incorporation of thoſe Legiſlatures could alone effectually remove.

It was a melancholy, but, he feared, an incontrovertible truth, that the ſtate of Ireland had, at no period of its hiſtory, with which we are acquainted, been ſuch as to afford ſatisfaction to any mind, that could juſtly appreciate the bleſſings of a well-ordered, a flouriſhing, and a happy condition of civil ſociety. The bounty of Providence had, indeed, been diſplayed in that country by a fertile ſoil, and by abundant means of internal improvement and proſperity; its inhabitants had not been leſs diſtinguiſhed than thoſe of Great Britain, in correſponding ſtations of life, for eloquence, for literary and ſcientific acquirements, and for thoſe talents and exertions, which have eſtabliſhed the naval and military renown of the Britiſh empire. Their form of government was the ſame as our own, but it wanted its true characteriſtics; it did not, like ours, beſtow and receive general confidence and protection: for it was not, like ours, connected by ties, which he truſted were here indiſſoluble, with the obvious intereſts, the feelings and the ſentiments of the great body of the people.

The truth was, that, in contemplating the ſtate of Ireland, even at a period of apparent tranquillity, it was impoſſible not to diſcover thoſe ſeeds of animoſity, which have unhappily been matured by circumſtances into inſurrection and rebellion. To account, in a great degree, for this animoſity, it might, perhaps, be ſufficient to ſtate, that a large majority of the people were Catholics, and that four-fifths of the property was in the hands of Proteſtants, who are alone legally competent to hold the high offices of ſtate, and to perform the functions of legiſlation. Hereditary feelings and reſentments had, beſides, contributed

tributed to keep these elements of internal discord in almost constant agitation. The extensive confiscations which took place at the commencement of the last century, when, after the suppression of the rebellion by Lord Mountjoy, almost the whole province of Ulster became forfeited to the Crown; the creation of numerous boroughs by James the First; which in effect transferred the legislative authority from the Catholics to the Protestants; the Act of Settlement, and explanation; the severities exercised by Cromwell; the event of the battle of the Boyne, and the surrender of Limerick (though the articles of capitulation in the latter instance prove, what was indeed manifested by the whole tenour of his conduct, that a spirit of intolerance and persecution made no part of the character of King William;) the code of Popery Laws, which, however necessary for the security of persons of one persuasion, must be admitted to have operated with great severity on those of the other: all these circumstances could not fail to recur forcibly to the minds of the Catholics, to keep alive the sensations which they successively excited, and to make them look with irritation at power, when they saw it lodged in the hands of those whom they considered as their oppressors; whose religious opinions they conceived to be heretical, and who were in possession of that property which the Catholics supposed had been unjustly wrested from their ancestors.

On the other hand, the horrible excesses to which the vindictive fury and bigotry of the Catholics were carried in 1641; the dreadful use they made of the power, which they acquired upon the usurpation of James the Second (for the government of James the

Second

Second in Ireland was an uſurpation after he had abdicated the throne of England); the forfeitures, the ſequeſtrations, and the attainders, which then took place, had neceſſarily engendered thoſe ſentiments of apprehenſion and diſtruſt in the Proteſtants of that country, which occaſioned, and appeared to juſtify, the code of penalties and diſabilities which was enacted at the commencement of the preſent century.

Such, he feared, was a true repreſentation of the ſtate and temper of Ireland; and he was convinced that no remedy could be effectual, but ſuch as would ſtrike at the root of the evil, would abate the ſtruggles for power, would remove the impediments to civilization and internal improvement, and by which the Proteſtant and Catholic inhabitants of the two countries would become one people, under the ſuperintending authority and protection of an united and imperial Parliament.

The Speaker then ſtated that about the year 1778, a material change of ſyſtem took place: the extinction of the hopes of the Houſe of Stuart, and the peaceable demeanour of the Roman Catholics, led to a repeal of the penal code, which bore upon them with peculiar hardſhip; and they obtained from the juſtice of the Iriſh Parliament full ſecurity to their property, complete perſonal liberty, and a perfect toleration of their religion. A wiſe and liberal policy induced the Legiſlature of this country to relax, at the ſame period, the ſtrictneſs of the Act of Navigation, and of our colonial ſyſtem: and an unqualified participation of the foreign trade of Great Britain was accordingly given to his Majeſty's ſubjects in Ireland.

Further conceſſions, of a political nature, were made in the year 1782. The controul of the Privy Council, under what was called Poyning's Law, was aboliſhed; and the act of the ſixth of George the Firſt, affirming the power and authority of the King, by and with the conſent of the Lords and Commons of Great Britain, to make laws and ſtatutes to bind the kingdom and people of Ireland, was repealed. The independence of the Parliament of Ireland was thus fully and completely eſtabliſhed: and, in the ſubſequent year, the appellant juriſdiction of the Britiſh Houſe of Peers from the Courts of Law in that country was done away. Without calling in queſtion the wiſdom or expediency of the meaſures laſt deſcribed, it would not, he truſted, be thought diſreſpectful or improper to obſerve, for the obſervation was warranted by a Reſolution of that Houſe, that, however ſufficient they might be for the removal of the grievances of which Ireland then complained, they were defective, and incomplete for the purpoſe of adjuſting the relation in which the two countries were thenceforward to ſtand, as branches of the ſame empire; that they looſened the ancient ties of connection, and that they ſubſtituted no others in their place.

Such a ſtate of things might poſſibly have ſubſiſted for a time, during a period of tranquillity; but it was ill ſuited to bear the agitation of that tempeſt, which ſoon convulſed a conſiderable part of Europe, and extended its malignant and deſolating principles to the ſiſter kingdom. For its influence and its ravages it there unfortunately found an ample field: there were wanting in that country (as he had before ſtated), thoſe links by which the body of the people

ſhould

ſhould be connected with the Government: there were not, in the degree at leaſt that could be wiſhed, thoſe ties between the higher and the great maſs of the lower orders of the community, which are, perhaps, the beſt ſecurity for internal peace and tranquillity. In many parts of the country the non-reſidence of proprietors, and the intervention of other perſons and other intereſts, obſtructed that communication and intercourſe between landlord and tenant which were equally advantageous to both, and to the country at large. The predominance of numbers, as had been already mentioned, was on the part of the Catholics, that of property on the part of the Proteſtants. The new philoſophy had taught the dreadful leſſon that was to be derived from ſuch a diſproportion: religious bigotry, for the firſt time, came in aid of principles always formidable, and aggravated the danger ariſing from the phyſical ſtrength of numbers, and the new doctrines of the Rights of Man.

With the particulars of the convulſion that had recently taken place, all were too well acquainted. He would not now enter into them, but confine himſelf to a conſideration of the various plans which had been propoſed for reſtoring tranquillity to Ireland, and for perpetuating her connection with Great Britain. Of theſe, Catholic Emancipation, as it is called; the re-enactment of the Popery laws, in the whole or in part; and an incorporation of the Legiſlature of the two countries, had each its ſeparate advocates.

The objections to Catholic Emancipation, coupled as it was, according to the general opinion of its advocates, with Parliamentary Reform, were, in the lan-

guage of Mr. Foſter, whoſe name he could not mention but with ſentiments of reſpect, "that it had the "tendency to give the influence to numbers, and to "take it from property, and to overwhelm the rights "of the Proteſtants of Ireland."

The Speaker acknowledged, that he was anxious for the removal of the moſt obnoxious grounds of complaint againſt what was termed the Proteſtant Aſcendancy; but he ſought for the attainment of this deſirable object, by no other means than thoſe of a Legiſlative Union; and not at the hazard of thoſe formidable conſequences, which Catholic Emancipation, with all that belonged to it, was, in his opinion, calculated to produce. Indeed, if the Catholics were true to their conſcience and their creed, the Proteſtant eſtabliſhment muſt be expoſed by ſuch a change to immediate, and, perhaps, inevitable danger; and the ſtate of the Proteſtants under ſuch circumſtances, be rendered worſe than that of the Catholics during any period of the preſent and preceding century. If actuated by intereſt and paſſion (by which he did not ſuppoſe that they were likely to be more or leſs influenced than others), they could not be ſuppoſed to poſſeſs, without exerciſing it, the power of recovering that property of which they conceived their anceſtors to have been wrongfully deprived; and if, under the preſent circumſtances, the inconveniences ariſing from the diſcordant proceedings of diſtinct Legiſlatures have been regarded with anxiety and apprehenſion, he could not but conceive ſuch ſenſations would be applicable in a far ſtronger degree, if political power was poſſeſſed by thoſe, between whom, and the Parliament

of Great Britain, a greater variety of differences from various cauſes, might be ſuppoſed to ariſe, and on points leſs capable of reconciliation and adjuſtment.

His Honourable Friend who ſpoke laſt, he obſerved, thought that it would be expedient for the Parliament of Ireland, to tread back ſome of the ſteps that had been taken, and to re-enact the whole code of the Popery laws (the repeal of which had been the ſubject of ſuch general encomium and ſatisfaction) againſt the Catholics, who did not produce certificates of their peaceable and loyal conduct during the late rebellion: and to provide that thoſe by whom ſuch certificates were produced, ſhould be admitted to all the rights and privileges enjoyed by Proteſtants; but he had alſo intimated ſuch an opinion of the Catholics, as to leave little hope that many of them would be entitled to the benefit of ſuch a diſtinction.

That diſaffection had ſpread widely amongſt that body, could not, he feared, be conteſted; that it had been ſo nearly univerſal, as ſome perſons had imagined, he thought there were ſolid grounds to deny. Many individuals of the yeomanry and other volunteer corps, and moſt of thoſe of whom the militia regiments conſiſted, were of that perſuaſion; and yet they had in general manifeſted the utmoſt degree of ardour and alacrity in reſiſting the internal, as well as the foreign enemies of their country. He was, however, concerned to think that, on the part of a large proportion of the Catholics, ſtrong prejudices againſt this country muſt be confeſſed to exiſt; but he was convinced that they aroſe, in a great degree, from the perſuaſion that the Proteſtant aſcendancy

was

was principally maintained by Britiſh connection, and Britiſh power.

He ſaid that the proceeding which had been recommended by his Honourable Friend, would, if his advice was followed, appear to imply that the rebellion had been carried on by Catholics only; a ſuppoſition which the accounts received from the ſeat of it, and the characters and confeſſions of many of the United Iriſhmen, would effectually diſprove. The propoſed diſcrimination would, he was perſuaded, if adopted, add fuel to the flame, and create new ſources of diſſenſion and hoſtility. It ſhould beſides be obſerved, that many who, from motives of hypocriſy, or of regard to their perſonal ſafety, had not given way to the malignant ſuggeſtions of their own minds, by taking up arms againſt the Government, would thereby be countenanced; whereas, in other parts, that had been the ſcene of inſurrection and rebellion, the Catholic, who had yielded to a momentary, though an unjuſtifiable impulſe, would, by one raſh ſtep, be excluded for ever. This was not a mode, according to his opinion, of healing the diviſions, and of eſtabliſhing the tranquillity of Ireland: it could not have the effect of allaying the irritation of the Catholics, nor of conveying to the Proteſtants a greater degree of confidence and ſecurity.

The Speaker then adverted to the meaſure of 1793, by which the competency to enjoy and exerciſe the elective franchiſe, and to hold certain offices, was afforded to the Roman Catholics of Ireland, and to the opinion which had been ſtated concerning it, from an authority to which he had before referred. "For "that meaſure," Mr. Foſter had ſaid, "that he "could

" could not thank the Iriſh Miniſter, though he did " for many others; for that from his ſoul he conſi- " dered it as the prelude and forerunner of the " overthrow of the Proteſtant eſtabliſhment in Ire- " land;"—" that it hazarded the Hanover ſucceſſion " and the connection with Great Britain."

From theſe opinions he was far from diſſenting; he had quoted them, not only to mark the danger which was apprehended from the proceedings of 1793, by a Gentleman known to be friendly to the Proteſtant eſtabliſhment, and to the connection with Great Britain, but for the purpoſe of founding upon them an argument in favour of the meaſure in queſtion. If the predictions of Mr. Foſter were well founded, and he confeſſed that they accorded in a great degree with his own ſentiments and apprehenſions, he ſaw no means by which their accompliſhment could poſſibly be averted, but by a legiſlative Union, or by a renewal of the reſtrictions and diſabilities which were done away by the Act of 1793. Of the former meaſure Mr. Foſter had very recently diſapproved, and it could not therefore but be ſuppoſed that it was by the latter only, that he could hope to prevent thoſe calamities, which, he was convinced, were deprecated by no one more anxiouſly and ſincerely, than by that Honourable Gentleman himſelf.

He would, however, acknowledge that if he were obliged to make an option between a recurrence to ſo much of the ſyſtem of the Popery laws as was repealed that time, or to Catholic Emancipation, coupled with Parliamenrary Reform, he ſhould conceive that beſt conſulted the tranquillity of Ireland, and the intereſts of the empire at large, in giving the pre-

ference

ference to the former: but that it was, in a great meaſure, becauſe his objections to both were radical and inſuperable, that he was compelled to give his cordial and entire ſupport to the meaſure of a legiſlative Union.

He ſaid, it was a ſatisfaction to him to know that the opinion which he entertainted on this ſubject was ſanctioned by great and reſpectable authorities. It could not be unimportant to the weight and credit of ſuch a meaſure, to ſtate that it had been countenanced by diſtinguiſhed and enlightened men in the laſt century; that it had the approbation of Sir Matthew Decker, Sir William Petty, and Sir Joſiah Child; that Molineux, the friend of Locke, who had incurred, as the Journals could teſtify, the diſpleaſure of that Houſe, for his bold aſſertion of the independent authority of the Parliament of his native country, anxiouſly wiſhed for its adoption. After having referred in his publication on this ſubject, to many ancient documents, for the purpoſe of proving that at an early period of our hiſtory, delegates from Ireland had been ſent to the Parliament of Great Britain, Mr. Molineux adds—"If from theſe records it be concluded that the Parliament of England may bind Ireland, it muſt alſo be allowed that the people of Ireland ought to have their repreſentatives in the Parliament of England; and this I believe we ſhould be willing enough to embrace, but it is an happineſs we can hardly hope for."

It was alſo material to ſtate, that in the ſecond year of the reign of Queen Anne, when, as had been ſaid, it had become difficult for the Proteſtants, to keep their ground in Ireland, a Committee of the Houſe

of Lords of that kingdom was appointed to take into conſideration the ſtate of the nation: and the Committee reported, "That upon due conſideration of "the preſent conſtitution of this kingdom, ſuch an "humble repreſentation be made to the Queen of "the ſtate and condition thereof, as may beſt incline "her Majeſty, by ſuch proper means as to her "Majeſty ſhall ſeem fit, to promote ſuch an Union "with England as may beſt qualify the ſtates of this "kingdom to be repreſented there." The propoſition was not liſtened to by the Queen's Miniſters, and, as has been ſtated by Lord Clare, "it was not "till this attempt to unite the Parliaments of both "countries had proved abortive, that the great code "of the Popery laws of Ireland was enacted: a code," he admitted, "of great ſeverity, but evidently "forced upon the Parliament by neceſſity."

To theſe authorities, and many others might be cited in ſupport of them, he had the utmoſt ſatisfaction in adding thoſe of Lord Clare, Lord Carleton, Lord Kilwarden, and particularly of Lord Yelverton, who had been called the "Father of the Independence "of the Iriſh Parliament," but whoſe ſentiments at this time were by no means inconſiſtent with his conduct in 1782; as it was only by the eſtabliſhment of the independence of the Parliament of Ireland, that a legiſlative Union could be the reſult of compact between the two countries. Without that meaſure it muſt have been an act of power on the part of Great Britain.

To the opinions of theſe great and enlightened men, who have proved themſelves to be the true friends of Great Britain and Ireland, by their conſtant

endeavours to encourage and promote a close and intimate connection between the two countries, he desired to add those entertained by Dr. M'Nevin and others, of that, which (with reference to their own views and projects) they justly denominated *a fatal* measure. It would be recollected, that these persons have declared, that, on their parts, Catholic Emancipation was a mere pretence, and that separation was the real and invariable object of all their hopes and all their efforts. On the 9th of April 1795, *the Committee of Nine*, of which Dr. M'Nevin, Lewins, Ryan, and others of the same description, were members, assembled at the Chapel in Francis-street, Dublin, and came to the following, amongst other resolutions:

"Resolved unanimously, That we are sincerely and "unalterably attached to the rights, liberties, and in- "dependence of our native country, and we pledge "ourselves, collectively and individually, to resist, "even our own emancipation, if proposed to be con- "ceded on the ignominious terms of acquiescence in "the fatal measure of an Union with the sister kingdom.

"Resolved unanimously, That the thanks of this "meeting be respectfully presented to our agent, "Theobald Wolfe Tone, Esq. for the readiness with "which he accompanied our deputies to England, "and the many other important services he has ren- "dered to the Catholic body, in pursuit of emanci- "pation—services, which no gratitude can over- "rate, and no remuneration can overpay."

It was not, however, upon authority only, much as he was inclined to respect it, nor upon the repugnance of United Irishmen to this measure, that he was disposed to support and recommend it. He thought

thought that it was calculated to avert much probable evil from both countries, and to produce positive and substantial advantages to both.

One of the leading considerations in its favour was, that it would in future preclude the inconvenience and danger, of which recent experience warrants the apprehension, arising from the discordant determinations of separate and independent Legislatures. He reminded the Committee of the proceedings of the Irish Parliament, upon the subject of the Commercial Propositions in 1785, and the question of the appointment of a Regent, which occurred in 1788. In the former, the sensitive jealousy of the Parliament of Ireland deprived that country of the obvious and undisputed advantages which were held out to it, by a free access to the home market of Great Britain; in the latter, it would be recollected that the diversity of opinion, which occurred in the two Parliaments, led not only to a difference as to the extent of the power and authority, but as to the identity of the person, by whom, during the illness of his Majesty, the functions of executive government were to be exercised. The same illustrious Personage was indeed nominated by both, but by one as a matter of choice; in virtue of a supposed right by the other: in one with more limited powers; in the other with powers as unlimited as those of the Monarch himself. It was therefore obvious that the discordant principles, which operated at that juncture, and which actually occasioned the delegation of different degrees of authority, might also have led to the nomination of different individuals: and this at the hazard of the tranquillity and safety of the empire, and in direct violation

of the ſpirit of the unrepealed ſtatute of Henry VIII. which enacts that "the kingdom of Ireland is inſe-
"parably annexed to, and dependent upon, the
"Crown of Great Britain, and that whoever is King
"of England is thereby *ipſo facto* King of Ireland."

Upon every thinking mind a deep impreſſion was made by theſe tranſactions; and a very reſpectable Gentleman, who now holds a high office in Ireland, is reported to have ſaid, in a debate at that period, "If theſe ſentiments are to prevail, what ſhall pre-
"vent us to-morrow from adopting a different Mu-
"tiny-bill, or diſclaiming an uniformity in religion?
"The unity of the executive magiſtrate has been
"well called the ſolitary bond of union; but can it
"exiſt for a moment, if a poſſibility remains of the
"two Legiſlatures being diſcordant on this ſubject?
"Unleſs one is ſuffered to take the lead, the alter-
"native is obvious: with two Legiſlatures ſo liable
"to pull different ways, no authority can govern."

His Honourable Friend, who preceded him, appeared, however, to be under little apprehenſion upon the ſubject of a poſſible difference of ſentiments and conduct, in the two Legiſlatures. He thought that as the King of Great Britain was the ſupreme executive magiſtrate, and therefore veſted with the ſame prerogatives in both countries, it was not to be ſuppoſed that thoſe embarraſſments and dangers would ariſe, which might be occaſioned by a declared difference of opinion on the ſubject of treaties, or on the great queſtions of peace or war. The Speaker ſaid, he knew and reſpected the prerogatives of the Crown, but he likewiſe knew and reſpected the privileges of the people. Of theſe the power of the

purſe

purſe was the moſt important; it was the great inſtrument of ſupport and controul; the check upon the abuſe of power on the part of the adviſers of the Crown, and the ſafeguard and guardian of the intereſt and liberties of the people. It would not be contended that this great privilege was to be borne down by prerogative; and if not, it might, at a period of public emergency, be differently exerciſed in both countries. In one, ſupplies might be liberally granted; in the other, abſolutely withheld; and the co-operation of the two great branches of the empire could never be enſured, even on occaſions in which its ſecurity and independence were deeply and eſſentially involved. The Speaker, however, declared, that his hopes went farther; he thought, that if the preſent meaſure was carried into effect, it would not only preclude ſuch a diſcordance as he had deſcribed, but that it would lead to a coincidence of views and ſentiments in the great body of the people of both kingdoms; that they would all look the ſame way; and that their feelings and opinions would invariably recogniſe the ſame intereſts, the ſame allies, and the ſame enemies.

He muſt however declare, that no conſideration ſo forcibly impelled him to wiſh for the adoption of this meaſure, as his conviction of the beneficial conſequences with which it would be attended to the internal ſituation of Ireland: his hope and belief were, that it would lead to the removal of a principal ground of animoſity, by precluding the ſpecies of conteſt, which had hitherto ſubſiſted for obtaining political authority and power.—Amongſt the lower orders of ſociety, he was convinced that its ſalutary effects would be found

found in that change of manners, the reſult of habitual induſtry, which would neceſſarily be produced by the tranſfer of a part of the capital of Great Britain to that country. Could it be ſuppoſed, he would aſk, that perſons of opulence would be ſo much inclined to embark any part of their property from hence in the trade and commerce of Ireland, if the Parliament of that country were ſtill to remain diſtinct from, inſtead of being incorporated with that of Great Britain? Of the conſequences which muſt be produced by ſuch an application of part of the wealth of this country, no doubt could be entertained: it would operate on every claſs of the community, and diffuſe itſelf throughout every part of that kingdom: and notwithſtanding what had been ſaid of the aggravation that would be occaſioned by a legiſlative Union to the evil ariſing from the non-reſidence of the opulent proprietors of land in that country, he was convinced, that whatever had a tendency to give ſecurity to property and improvement to manners would prove the fallacy of ſuch a ſuppoſition; and that even thoſe waſtes and faſtneſſes, which now afford retreat to the marauder, the aſſaſſin, and the rebel, would be the ſcenes of cheerful labour and protected induſtry, of mutual confidence and ſocial intercourſe, under the ſuperintendence and guardianſhip of well adminiſtered and beneficent laws.

It had been ſaid, that amongſt the conſequences of ſuch a meaſure, it could not be contended that it would be poſſible to mention any immediate advantage to the Roman Catholics of Ireland: from this aſſertion, however, he muſt beg leave to diſſent. The elective franchiſe itſelf, beſtowed by the Parliament

liament of Ireland in 1793, could hardly be conſidered as a boon to the Roman Catholics, whom it was hoped and intended to gratify: the right, with the limitation annexed to it, could not be exerciſed in moſt inſtances, without ſome degree of violence to their opinions and their feelings: it could only be made uſe of for the purpoſe of contributing to form a Houſe of Commons, the whole body of which they too generally conceived to be adverſe to their intereſts, and thoſe of the individuals, to whom, from a coincidence in religious opinions and from other cauſes, they had been accuſtomed to look up with the utmoſt reſpect: Whereas the ſame franchiſe, if employed in contributing to form the repreſentation in an united Parliament, might be accompanied with the ſatisfactory reflection, that the individual in whoſe behalf it was exerciſed, would be mixed with thoſe, a majority of whom were uninfluenced by the prejudices which they have imputed, whether on ſufficient ground or otherwiſe is not now to be conſidered, to the Parliament and to the great body of the Proteſtants in Ireland.

With reſpect to the expediency of extending to the Roman Catholics of Great Britain and Ireland, in the event of ſuch a meaſure as was now in contemplation, a more ample participation of the rights of Proteſtant ſubjects, he would not now offer an opinion; he would however quote the ſentiments of a perſon (Dr. Duigenan) whoſe good ſenſe he admired, and who would not be accuſed of a ſtrong bias towards the Roman Catholics of Ireland: "It has been "the opinion of very great and able ſtateſmen, that "an union with England, on juſt and equitable

"terms,

" terms, would be very advantageous to Ireland, would " contribute greatly to increaſe her trade and her " opulence, and conduce to the ſtrength of the em- " pire at large: and in any event, it could not be " more prejudicial to the Romaniſts of Ireland, than " to any other claſs of his Majeſty's ſubjects here, " but much leſs (if it could be at all prejudicial, " which I cannot admit), in as much, if we were " one people with the Britiſh nation, the prepon- " derance of the Proteſtant body of the whole em- " pire would be ſo great, that all rivalſhip and jea- " louſies between Proteſtants and Romaniſts would " ceaſe or ever, and it would not be neceſſary, for " the ſafety of the empire at large, to curb Romaniſts " by any excluſive law whatſoever."

On the ſuppoſed ſurrender of the rights of the Parliament of Ireland, and the ſacrifice of its independency, he was not diſpoſed to dwell; the futility of the arguments on which thoſe objections were founded, was, in his opinion at leaſt, fully developed on a former occaſion: he would only ſay, that if an uniform coincidence ſhould take place between the two Legiſlatures, the independency of one or the other would be liable to be called in queſtion; and that without ſuch a coincidence the intereſts of the empire, and eventually the connexion between the two countries, might poſſibly be endangered.

The Speaker ſaid, he was not inclined to take up the time of the Committee by a reference to the particulars of the Union with Scotland, to the conſequences which followed that meaſure, or to the arguments which they ſuggeſted on the preſent occaſion. Theſe topics had been already diſcuſſed, in

a manner

a manner which could not fail to make a forcible impreſſion on the Houſe. He would only remark, that the animoſity between the two nations, immediately previous to the Union, was ſuch, as to have led them to the verge of hoſtilities; and that the grounds of diſtruſt, and complaint, were thereby entirely done away. He alſo obſerved, that there were circumſtances tending to facilitate an intimate connexion between this country and Ireland, and to incorporate the people of thoſe kingdoms, which did not belong to the relation in which England and Scotland ſtood to each other. It would be recollected, amongſt other illuſtrations of this obſervation, that here, and in Ireland, there was the ſame code of civil and criminal law; the ſame forms for the adminiſtration of juſtice; and for the purpoſes of legiſlation, the ſame ſucceſſion to the crown; and the ſame eſtabliſhed religion.

Having ſtated a few of the many conſiderations which, in his opinion, recommended this meaſure, he thought it incumbent upon him to notice ſome of the objections that had been made to it. Of theſe there were two, either of which, if valid, was fundamental and inſuperable. The firſt was to the competency of the Parliament of Ireland to accede to this meaſure: the ſecond relied on the final adjuſtment, as it had been termed, of the year 1782. The one called in queſtion the nature and extent of the authority of the Parliament of Ireland; the other ſolemnly appealed to the good faith of the Parliament of Great Britain. In viewing the queſtion of competency, he ſaid, it appeared to him that new doctrines of the preſent day were on the one ſide,

and the ſound principles, the theory and the practice of the Britiſh conſtitution, on the other. The higheſt legal authorities affirmed the extent and the ſupremacy of the power of Parliament. It was ſufficient to refer to the names of Sir Edward Coke, Sir Matthew Hale, Sir William Blackſtone, and many others, who, to ſay the leaſt, have never been charged with a bias againſt the conſtitution and liberties of their country.

That the functions of the Legiſlature ſhould be exerciſed on all occaſions, and particularly on one ſo ſolemn and important as the preſent, with the utmoſt circumſpection, would be readily and univerſally allowed. It muſt alſo be admitted, that Parliament poſſeſſes the power, and the right, when called for by the obligation of providing for the public ſecurity and welfare, to new-model the conſtitution, and to alter the ſucceſſion to the Crown, and the eſtabliſhed religion of theſe kingdoms; and he would then aſk thoſe to whoſe objections he was referring, where, if not in Parliament, the means of carrying into effect ſuch an arrangement as that which is now in contemplation, however neceſſary, and however approved, could poſſibly be ſuppoſed to reſide? Not in the conſtituent body, for it would hardly be ſaid that they had delegated a truſt to their repreſentatives, with a reſervation in particular caſes: not in the people at large, for ſuch a ſuppoſition would imply the diſſolution of the Government; as it is an eſtabliſhed truth, that, whilſt the conſtitution exiſts, the only legitimate ſanction of public opinion, and its only efficient authority, muſt be derived from the proceedings of Parliament. "This is the

"place,"

" place," Sir William Blackſtone obſerves, " where " that tranſcendent and abſolute power, which muſt " in all governments reſide ſomewhere, is entruſted " by the conſtitution of theſe kingdoms."

The attempts to preclude the diſcuſſion of the preſent ſubject, by the denomination of a Final Adjuſtment, which had been beſtowed on the proceedings of the year 1782, ſtruck him with more aſtoniſhment than even thoſe which he had read and heard againſt the ſufficiency of Parliament itſelf. If any importance were to be attached to thoſe words, he ſhould have expected to find them ſolemnly recorded in acts of the reſpective Legiſlatures, as the baſis of the new relation which then took place between the two countries: what, however, was the fact? They are mentioned in a meſſage from the King, and noticed in the addreſſes of the Britiſh Parliament, and of the Houſe of Lords in Ireland; but in the addreſs of the Houſe of Commons of that country, theſe words are not to be found.

He obſerved, that as it had been the practice (and a judicious one it was, where there is a general concurrence of opinion), that the addreſs ſhould accord with the ſpeech or the meſſage from his Majeſty, the omiſſion was remarkable. All, however, that had been ſaid upon this part of the ſubject, appeared to him to be a diſpute about words; for he was ready to acknowledge, that the Britiſh Parliament would juſtly incur the imputation of a groſs breach of faith, if they were to aim, either directly or indirectly, at the reſumption of the power and ſupremacy which were then ſolemnly renounced: that the adjuſtment, as far as the independency of the Iriſh Parliament

was concerned, was really and abſolutely final and concluſive; but if the argument, which was meant to be founded on theſe words, could be expected to avail, it muſt not only paſs over the meaſure which took place in the ſubſequent year, and the reſolution which immediately ſucceeded the act for the repeal of the 6th of Geo. I. but it muſt contend that the true import of thoſe words was ſo binding and peremptory, as to bar the poſſibility of adopting any ulterior arrangement of the nature of that to which they might be ſuppoſed to apply, however called for by the obvious intereſts, and the wiſhes of the inhabitants of both countries. Such a propoſition could not be maintained, and if not, the argument with which it was neceſſarily connected, muſt, in his opinion, fall to the ground.

The Speaker ſaid that ſome objections had been urged, the force of which he would by no means deny. He was thoroughly convinced that the Houſe of Commons, as at preſent conſtituted, was a true and faithful repreſentative of the people of Great Britain; that their opinions and their wiſhes (he did not mean the fluctuating and fleeting impreſſions of the day, but thoſe which were the reſult of information and reflection) had their due influence, and were there fully and accurately expreſſed. He could not, therefore, contemplate without anxiety, the poſſible effects of ſuch an alteration as the meaſure in queſtion would produce.

He was not, however, inclined to oppoſe a conjectural and contingent evil to that which was poſitive and immediate; or if he did, he muſt compare one, as cautiouſly as he could, with the other, and ſtrike

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the balance. His apprehenſions on this ſubject would be greater, were it not for the experience which has been afforded by the Union with Scotland: but the preſſing evils, which it was the duty of the Houſe, if poſſible, to avert, were uppermoſt in his mind; and he was convinced that every other remedy which had been ſuggeſted was fraught with conſequences infinitely more injurious than any of thoſe which even this circumſtance, objectionable as he allowed it to be, was capable of producing.

Of the danger to the commercial intereſts of this country, which had been adverted to, but which had not been much inſiſted upon, he ſaid he entertained no ſerious apprehenſion. It was not true that Great Britain would neceſſarily loſe what Ireland would gain. He knew beſides the liberality, and the good ſenſe of the merchants and manufacturers of this country: if Ireland ſhould ceaſe to be a ſeparate kingdom, they would not entertain a wiſh to withhold from her inhabitants a fair and equal participation of the advantages which were enjoyed by themſelves; and they were fully aware that whatever contributed to promote induſtry and to produce tranquillity, in Ireland, had a tendency to give additional ſecurity and ſtability to the trading intereſts of Great Britain.

It had been aſked, why, if this meaſure was brought forward with ſuch obvious advantages, the adoption of it had not been ſooner recommended? To which it had been juſtly and forcibly anſwered, that it ſhould not be wondered at, if thoſe, who are convinced that a cloſe connexion between the two countries is eſſential to the welfare of both, ſhould be particularly ſolicitous to ſtrengthen and confirm it,

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when the diſſolution of that connexion is the avowed object of the inteſtine traitors in Ireland, and of the common enemy of the two kingdoms.

He was, however, concerned to think, and to acknowledge, that precautionary wiſdom had very little influence on the conduct of individuals, or of nations; an evil muſt in general have been painfully experienced before meaſures are taken to remove it, or to guard againſt its return: the abuſes of power led to that eſtabliſhment of our rights, and that ſecurity to our liberties, which took place at the Revolution. The weight of the public debt was becoming, at leaſt in the opinion of many, intolerable to the ſubjects of this country, before efficacious meaſures were adopted for its diminution; and it was not until public credit was ſeriouſly reduced, and the objections to the plan of raiſing the ſupplies of the year, by the ordinary practice of loans, became almoſt inſuperable, that the ſyſtem of the preſent ſeſſion of Parliament was adopted; which, however burdenſome, was a ſubject of general approbation, and a ſource of pride, of ſatisfaction, and of confidence to a great majority of the people.

To this want of promptitude to provide againſt remote and contingent evils, one exception indeed preſented itſelf to his recollection: it was the meaſure adopted by the Parliament in 1791, which provided, that in caſe of future loans a further ſum ſhould be borrowed, to be applied as a ſinking fund, for the purpoſe of gradually redeeming the addition thereby occaſioned to the funded debt. Too much could not be ſaid in commendation of the

the provident wiſdom and juſtice of that meaſure, which is conſtantly employed in diminiſhing the preſſure upon public credit, which ariſes from an increaſing accumulation of the debt contracted ſince the commencement of the war; and in effecting an entire relief from its burdens perhaps to ourſelves, but certainly, and at no diſtant period, to our deſcendants.

Some Gentlemen had entertained an opinion which, he acknowledged, was entitled to ſerious attention and conſideration; that, as the propoſed meaſure had been diſcountenanced by the Houſe of Commons in Ireland, to perſiſt in the diſcuſſion of it here, would be to add to the irritation which unhappily prevails in that country. Such an effect he ſhould ſincerely lament, and ſhould be ſorry to have any ſhare in producing. There were other conſequences, however, which it was of the utmoſt importance to avert. If the Parliament of this country were to abſtain from declaring the conditions upon which it would be diſpoſed to incorporate itſelf with the Parliament of Ireland, it was impoſſible not to be aware of the opportunity and ſcope which would be afforded for miſconception, ſuſpicion, and miſrepreſentation.

He truſted that we ſhould adopt ſuch reſolutions as would rather tend to appeaſe, than to inflame; ſuch as would be a pledge of our liberality, and our juſtice: that we ſhould manifeſt the earneſtneſs and ſincerity of our wiſhes to communicate to Ireland a full participation of all the advantages we enjoy; that we ſhould prove ourſelves deſirous of conſidering the inhabitants of the two countries as

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one people, connected together by the cloſeſt ties under the ſame Conſtitution, the ſame Parliament, and the ſame King.

He had underſtood that, if the Reſolutions which had been opened ſhould be agreed to, it would be propoſed that they ſhould be carried to the foot of the Throne, accompanied by an Addreſs to his Majeſty. In that Addreſs he hoped, and was perſuaded, that no ſentiments or expreſſions would be introduced which jealouſy might miſinterpret, or malice pervert: that there would be no indication of a wiſh on our part to preſs the conſideration of the queſtion upon the Legiſlature of Ireland; and that no impulſe would be given to it, but what it might derive from the free and unbiaſſed opinions, and diſpaſſionate judgment of the Parliament and People of that kingdom.

The ſubject, he was convinced, would make its way. To Ireland he was ſatisfied that greater advantages were now held out, than had ever been afforded by any ſingle meaſure to any country; that it would greatly augment the reſources, and place upon a rock that would be impregnable, as far as that term could be applied to any human eſtabliſhment, the ſtrength and ſecurity of the Britiſh empire. He would, however, acknowledge, that his views and hopes extended ſtill farther, as he was thoroughly perſuaded, that whatever had a tendency to conſolidate and maintain the power and the independence of theſe kingdoms, was of the deepeſt importance to the beſt and moſt valuable intereſts of mankind.—From theſe conſiderations he gave the Reſolution his moſt cordial ſupport.

THE END.